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Contact: Kevin Hardy

### **Louisiana Chosen to Participate In National Higher Ed Financial Policy Project**

Louisiana is one of five new states that have been selected to take part in an ongoing national project studying the implications and advantages of integrating appropriations, tuition and financial aid policies to foster improved college access and success for students. The project, entitled *Changing Direction: Integrating Higher Education Financial Aid and Financing Policy*, is spearheaded by the Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education (WICHE) and funded through a grant from the Lumina Foundation for Education. Louisiana's participation will run from March 1, 2004 to at least February 28, 2005, with the option of a one-year extension.

"The objectives of this project complement precisely the primary goal of Louisiana's Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education, which is to 'increase opportunities for student access and success,'" said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "While we've made great strides in postsecondary education over the last several years, the state continues to struggle with an economy and revenue structure that challenge our ability to provide appropriate levels of financial support in all areas of state services. Only through carefully considered state policies that integrate the three components of financial support for our colleges and universities will Louisiana be successful in continuing to improve our postsecondary education system. Participation in the *Changing Directions* project will provide Louisiana the basis upon which to formulate and implement state policy which successfully supports our efforts."

Savoie also said that the project is particularly timely, given the Regents' charge by the Louisiana Legislature last year to formulate a statewide tuition policy that takes into account the overall funding structure of postsecondary education.

The state's first activity with the project will be participation in a National Policy Forum in Seattle this June that will explore strategies and policies around the project's major issues. Louisiana is joined by Hawaii, Idaho, Oklahoma and Tennessee as a new participant in *Changing Directions*.

